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Why did the leaders of the Europeans who settled in North America try to exterminate the peoples already living there? How was the campaign of genocide against the Indians linked to the expansion of capitalism in the United States? Noted Marxist George Novack answers these questions.

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GENOCIDE *against the* INDIANS



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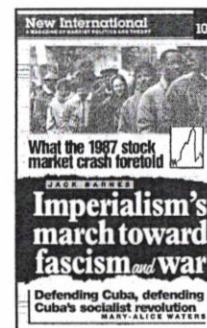
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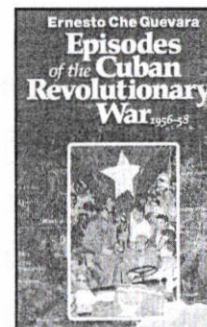
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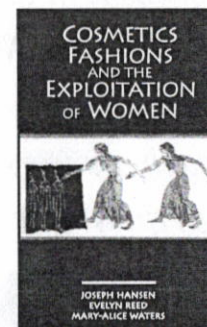
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ments of science and technology, including the science of social change and the techniques of struggle for political power.

Uprooting all the abominations of class society and cultivating everything worthy in the techniques, knowledge, and culture taken over from capitalism, the artificers of the coming society will vindicate the achievements of the past by surpassing them. The "liberty, equality, and fraternity" known in America's infancy, which the bourgeoisie blasphemed and buried, will be regenerated and enjoyed in its finest forms through the socialist revolution of the working people.

It is the capitalist proprietors who are the barbarians in the midst of modern society, resorting in their desperate struggle for survival to the most fiendish weapons and practices. To remove them from the seats of power is the central task of our generation. Mankind cannot resume its upward climb until civilization is rescued from capitalist barbarism.

Introduction

The North American Indians have joined the Blacks and Chicanos in speaking out against their oppression and taking direct action to overcome it. The "Red Power" movement is arrowheaded by young militants who, unlike the Uncle Tomahawks, will no longer tolerate the injustices done to their race. Inspired in part by the liberation movements of the colonial world, especially in Vietnam, and by the Afro-American struggle for self-determination, they have set out to rouse their people from apathy and combat the system and government that has held them in misery, destitution, and humiliation.

From one coast to the other these New Indians have taken steps to dramatize their intention to reclaim a portion of the lands that were stolen from them. One group of Native Americans has seized and settled on Alcatraz Island in San Francisco Bay. Another has tried to take over Fort Lawton outside Seattle, named after the general who forced Geronimo to surrender. They propose to transform it into a cultural and educational center for their people. They are claiming this place, according to the proclamation of the United American Indians of All Tribes, because it "does not resemble most Indian reservations. It has potential for modern facilities, ad-

equate sanitation, health care, fresh running water, educational facilities, fisheries, research facilities, and transportation."

A third band has attempted to occupy Ellis Island in New York harbor and make the abandoned reception center for immigrants into a place of assembly for tribal life, a headquarters of Indian culture which could include a museum illustrating what the white men have given the Indian—"disease, alcohol, poverty, and cultural desecration."

The "Indian Power" movement has two main motivations. One is the resolve to throw off the degradation to which Indians have been subjected for so many decades. The other is a vigorous reassertion of the will to preserve their tribal heritage and resist the pressures exerted by white capitalist society to consummate the physical genocide of the past with cultural genocide in the present.

The New Indians want to receive a fair share of the benefits of modern production and civilization but not at the price of the extinction of the virtues and values of their distinctive way of life. Bitter experience has taught them that the delicate and difficult process of adjustment from the old to the new cannot proceed to their satisfaction unless they have secured the right of self-determination. It is bound to be frustrated if they remain at the mercy of government bureaucrats who subordinate Indian needs and welfare to capitalist interests.

The upsurge of nationalism among the Indians of the United States and Canada opens a new era in the relations between the original inhabitants and the incumbent masters of North America. It should draw attention to their early history, that shameful chronicle of unrelenting extermination and perfidious dealings, capped by "malign neglect," which forms the background to the current situation.

The overwhelming of the Indians by the white aggressors, which is the theme of this pamphlet, is a very familiar story, at least in its superficial aspects. But my treatment of the subject

This new social power has already announced itself through the swift insurgence of the CIO in the late thirties when, after operating like uncontrolled despots in basic industry for many decades, the monopolists suddenly were challenged by powerful unions of industrial workers. These organized workers are now knocking on the doors of political power.

Let us assure both the witch-hunters and the witch doctors of capitalism that the American monopolists will not be overthrown, like the Indians, by foreign forces. They are destined to be dislodged from within, like the feudal landlords, the English crown, and the Southern slavocracy. This job will be done by social forces generated under their own system and provoked by their own reactionary rule. Not least among these forces will be the descendants of the red, black, and brown peoples which were subjugated by the bourgeois property owners on their way to supreme power.

The instinctive dread of this prospect accounts for the malevolence of the monopolists toward the workers and the belligerence of their intellectual defenders toward the socialist-minded vanguard. These banner-bearers of reaction do not dread so much the importation of ideas from abroad, for they welcome fascism and other brands of obscurantism. What they fear is the enlightenment and inspiration Marxism can give American workers and the oppressed nationalities in working out the ways and means of their emancipation. Hence the irreconcilable hostility toward "the philosophy of Marx, Engels and Lenin" expressed in Harvard President Conant's call to ideological battle.

When the pioneers of bourgeois society confronted their pre-capitalist foes, they had both the power and the historical mission to conquer. Their plutocratic heirs of the twentieth century have neither. In our time the workers are the pioneers and builders of the new world, the bearers of a higher culture. They embody a more efficient method of production and are fully capable of assimilating, mastering, and applying all the achieve-

past when the slow, steady evolution of social conditions exploded at critical junctures into tremendous upheavals which overturned the old order. American history is full of such sudden transitions and forward leaps. After the Indian tribes held the continent for thousands of years, invaders burst in from overseas, ousted the natives, and built an entirely different type of society here. Mother England dominated her thirteen colonies for over a century and a half until abruptly within a decade a definitive break occurred between the former ruler and the American people. Then, beginning with 1800, the planting power became predominant in national affairs—until the election of Republican President Lincoln in 1860 unleashed the Civil War.

Such reversals of existing conditions, resulting in a radical reconstruction of American society, are not at all restricted to the past. They are inherent in the present situation of American capitalism, which faces the same prospect as Indian tribalism, colonial feudalism, and chattel slavery. It has become obsolete and opposed to progress. The major evils from which mankind suffers are directly attributable to the outworn institution of capitalist private property. The emancipation of mankind from poverty, tyranny, and wars is inseparable from the liberation of the means of production from the grip of capitalist ownership and monopolist control.

At the same time the colossal expansion of socialized production under capitalist auspices has given birth to a new mighty social power. This is the industrial working class, which is itself the principal force of production in modern economy. This class heralds the coming age of atomic energy used for constructive, not for destructive, purposes. By its ideas, outlook, and actions, labor opens up an unrestricted historical horizon for humanity in the socialist future of the free and equal. The material prerequisites for this new form of production and collective life form and ripen within the capitalist structure itself.

pursues a special aim: not so much to tell what happened (there are plenty of such narratives of varying merit on the library shelves) but *why*. What were the driving forces behind the conflict between the opposing races which inexorably led to its tragic outcome?

I have used the Marxist method of historical materialism to answer this key question. What was involved was the collision of two disparate levels of historical development, two fundamentally different socioeconomic formations, two irreconcilable modes of life, types of culture and outlooks upon the world. The defeat of the native tribes was predetermined by the incomparably greater powers of production and destruction, numbers, wealth, and organization, on the side of the classes composing bourgeois civilization.

It is significant that the issue of the disposition of the land, which was at the root of their antagonism from the first, have again come to the fore in the new phase of their relations. The New Indians are disputing the white man's monopoly and misuse of the land. They want their just share to which they are entitled by ancestral right and treaty obligations. They want to collectively own and control their domains so that they can develop their culture and determine their future free from the dictates of the white oppressors.

In defending their identity, the Indians are displaying a new sense of pride and dignity. Along with the other nationalities which are challenging the domination of the American imperialists, they intend neither to be silenced nor subdued but to achieve their rights and aims as a people "by any means necessary."

The articles reprinted in this collection were first written and published over two decades ago in 1949. Then, at the beginning of the cold war reaction, both the revolutionary socialist and the Indian movement were at a low ebb. The recent rebirths of radicalism and nationalism in North America give a greater timeliness and relevance to these essays than

they had upon their original appearance. This explanation—and exposure—of the methods by which capitalism mounted to supremacy can acquaint rebels of all colors—white, red, black, and brown—with the real history and characteristics of the class that misrules the United States and a large part of the planet.

George Novack
April 1, 1970

were only a prelude to the building of a truly civilized life for the American people, and not at all the crowning acts of American civilization. These remain to be taken as the next great stage of our evolution matures and as we move toward socialism.

In the anti-Marxist polemics of spokesmen for capitalism, there is a fatal inconsistency. On one hand, they point to the unlimited potentialities of abundance in the manufacture of motor cars, atom bombs, supersonic planes, and other things—in a phrase, to the dynamic nature of our productive forces. On the other hand, they demand that these productive forces remain forever encased in capitalist ownership. While everything else is subject to improvement, capitalist control of the productive facilities and the political system which protects it are to be considered immutable. These alone are exempt from radical reconstruction and so close to perfection that they cannot be surpassed, at least not in any foreseeable future.

Whatever changes there may be, they say, must remain within the boundaries of capitalist relations and cannot overstep them. The method of social development must be restricted to small doses of change portioned to the needs of the ruling class.

There is no warrant for such arbitrary assumptions in American history, in the dynamics of our productive forces, or in the present state or prospects of class relations. The forms of property and methods of production in America have undergone at least three vast transformations in the past. When Indian tribalism, British-born feudalism, and Southern slavery collided with the new bourgeois forces of production, they were demolished. How absurd it is for the defenders of capitalism to bank for its salvation upon the very expansion of the productive forces which, increasingly stifled by capitalism, must lead to its downfall.

These students of history stubbornly refuse to learn from the

they cannot see or admit that there *are* distinct stages of American history; that these distinct epochs are interlinked in a necessary chain of connection; or that any significant sequence of development can be discerned in the complex social process.

Nevertheless, behind the sequence of social forms which bridged the transition from savagery to civilization on this continent, there is a lawfulness. Although it had endured for thousands of years, the communal organization of the Indian tribes had to give way before the superior forces of private property. When the feudalists tied up with English rule and later the slaveholders blocked the further development of the productive forces, they, too, were extinguished by the creators of capitalist power.

The bourgeois thinkers concentrate attention upon that side of American historical development whereby precapitalist methods of production and forms of property were displaced by ascending bourgeois relations. They largely ignore other aspects of the same process. It is true that the regimes following Indian tribalism multiplied the powers of production through the practices and passions of private ownership and "free enterprise," improved techniques, widened culture, and opened new vistas to mankind. But these acquisitions had to be paid for by increased inequality and the intensified oppression of the rulers over the ruled. Precious qualities of freedom and fraternity were lost in the shift from primitive collectivism to modern capitalism. As a result of the prevailing class division of society, humanity has remained stunted and defective.

Yet bourgeois thinkers assume that the triumph of capitalism coincides with the highest attainable summit of human existence. History is to be halted while the American people perpetually salute their capitalist commanders in the reviewing stand. How does such an outlook essentially differ from that of the slaveholders who could not adjust themselves to the advent of higher social forms?

In reality, the steps leading to the consolidation of capitalism

The **Conquest** of the **Indians**

The capitalist rulers of the United States mounted to power through a series of violent struggles against precapitalist social forces. The first of these upheavals took place at the dawn of modern American history with the invasion of the Western Hemisphere by the nations of Western Europe and the conquest of the aboriginal inhabitants. The uprooting of the Indians played a significant part in clearing the way for bourgeois supremacy on this continent.

However, the pages of the most learned historians contain little recognition and less understanding of this connection between the overthrow of Indian tribalism and the development of bourgeois society in America. As a rule, they regard the ousting and obliteration of the natives simply as an incident in the spread of the white man over the continent. They may condemn the treatment of the Indians as a lamentable blot on the historical record, but they do not see that it has any important bearing upon the formation of the United States.

This conventional view of Indian-white relations is shared by conservative and liberal writers alike. In their classic liberal interpretation of *The Rise of American Civilization*, Charles and Mary Beard, for example, utterly fail to grasp the social significance of the wars against the Indians, making only scanty dis-

connected references to them.

President Conant of Harvard has just supplied an instructive illustration of how far the Indian conquest has faded from the consciousness of bourgeois thinkers. During a speech at the New York Herald Tribune Forum in October 1948, Conant stated: "In the first place, this nation, unlike most others, has not evolved from a state founded on a military conquest. As a consequence we have nowhere in our tradition the idea of an aristocracy descended from the conquerors and entitled to rule by right of birth. On the contrary, we have developed our greatness in a period in which a fluid society overran a rich and empty continent. . . ."

Conant's speech summoned American educators to demonstrate in theoretical questions what American capitalism must prove in practice—the superiority of bourgeois ideas and methods over the "alien importations" of the "philosophy based on the writings of Marx, Engels, and Lenin." The Harvard president insisted that "not words, but facts" must be the weapons to convince the youth and defeat Marxism. The passage we have cited will hardly promote that purpose, for it contains two serious misstatements of fact about early American history.

In the first place, contrary to Conant's assertion, the bourgeois structure of this nation did "evolve from a state founded on a military conquest." It was the conquest of the Indian tribes, not to speak of wars against the Spanish, Dutch, and French, which gave England and her colonists mastery of North America.

Secondly, although North America in colonial times was far more thinly populated than Europe or Asia, it was scarcely "empty" of inhabitants. In order to occupy and overrun the continent, the pioneers first had to "empty" the land of its original possessors. The founders of Harvard could tell its present head many tales of the difficulties involved in this task.

What are the reasons for this extraordinary blind spot of the bourgeois historians and those who, like Conant, push to the

in place of communal property and its specific institutions, was an even more radical social upheaval than the contest between the colonists and the mother country.

The struggle of the eighteenth century was waged between forces and institutions which, although rooted in different countries and in different historical backgrounds, nevertheless shared identical relations of private property at their foundations. The fight against the Indians on the other hand arose from the unbridgeable chasm dividing archaic society from modern civilization, primeval communism from budding capitalism.

The grand course of social evolution on American soil falls into three main stages. It starts with the development of the Stone Age many thousands of years ago. This primitive period reached its peak in the Aztec, Mayan, and Incan cultures, and came to a close with the invasion of the white man at the end of the fifteenth century.

The second great epoch begins with the bringing of civilization by the Europeans. It proceeds through the various phases in the formation and transformation of bourgeois society which have culminated in the national and world supremacy of the American monopolists. The third stage, arising out of the second, had its inception with the birth of large-scale industry and the wageworking class.

What are the relations between these three overlapping epochs which mark off decisive steps in the advancement of American society? It is characteristic of the low theoretical level of bourgeois historians that they do not even broach this question, although it is fundamental in American history. They view capitalism as the sole system of society with solid substance and enduring structure; all others are passing phantoms. Indian tribalism, as we have noted, is to them a forgotten relic; socialism a horrible specter or an impossible fantasy—while civil society in its capitalist forms remains an eternal necessity. Consequently

kings, landed proprietors, planters, merchants, capitalists, small farmers, and town dwellers who directed and composed the new society.

The conflict between the red man and the white is usually represented as essentially *racial* in character. It is true that their mutual antagonism manifested itself and was carried on by both sides under the guise of racial hatred. But their war to the death was at bottom a *social* struggle, a battle for supremacy between two incompatible systems of production, forms of property, and ways of life. Like all profound social struggles the scramble for the sources and acquisition of wealth was at its root. In this case, the chief prize was individual ownership and "free" disposition of the land and its products.

These material stakes account for the obdurateness of the conflict which persisted through four centuries and for the implacable hostility displayed by white settlers of *all nationalities* toward the Indians of *all tribes*. This was also responsible in the last analysis for the impossibility of any harmony or enduring compromise between the two. One or the other had to yield and go under.

That is how the materialist school of Marxism interprets the cruel treatment accorded the Indians and the reasons for their downfall. If this explanation is accepted, prevailing views of early American history must be discarded. Schoolchildren, and not they alone, are taught nowadays that the first great social change in this country came from the Patriots' fight for independence in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. In the light of the foregoing analysis, this long-standing misconception has to be rejected.

The colonial uprising, for all its importance, was neither the first social transformation in America, nor can it be considered the most fundamental one. It was preceded, interwoven, and followed by the white invasion and penetration which overthrew the Indian tribal network. This process of struggle, undertaken to install the rule of private property and its corresponding institutions

extreme their preconceptions of our national origins?

There is, first of all, the weight of tradition. Historians continue to treat the Indians with the same disdain and lack of comprehension that their forefathers manifested in real life. The pioneers looked upon the Indians as little more than obnoxious obstacles in the path of their advancement who had to be cleared away by any means and at all costs. The English colonists rid their settlements of Indians as ruthlessly as they cleared the lands of trees and wild animals. They placed the Indian "varmints" and "serpents" on the same level as wild beasts. In early New England bounties were paid for Indian scalps as today they are awarded for the tails of predatory animals.

The contemporary professors do not know how to fit the Indians, and the facts of their dispossession and disappearance, into their schemes of interpretation any more than the pioneers were able to absorb them into bourgeois society. The government's final solution of the Indian problem has been to segregate the survivors in reservations, an American equivalent of the European concentration camps and the African compounds. The historians dispose of the Indians by also setting them off to one side, in a special category completely detached from the main course of American historical development.

Indeed, because of their unconscious and narrow class outlook, the bourgeois historians, on the whole, are hardly aware that the fate of the Indians presents any problem. They assume that private property must be the normal foundation of any "good" society. And so, the annihilation of Indian collectivism by the white conquerors for the sake of private property seems so much in the nature of things as to require no explanation.

But there is more involved than inertia or indifference. Freud has explained individual lapses of memory by an unconscious wish to hide from what is shameful, fearful, socially unacceptable. Where a social lapse of memory occurs, a similar mechanism and similar motives for suppression are often at work, es-

pecially where representatives of ruling classes engage in systematic forgetfulness. That is the case here. The abominable treatment of the Indians is extremely unpleasant to contemplate, and equally unpleasant to explain.

At the bottom of their censorship lies the bourgeois attitude toward the communal character of Indian life. The bourgeois mind finds communism in any form so contrary to its values, so abhorrent and abnormal, that it recoils from its manifestations and instinctively strives to bury recollections of their existence. In any event, the run-of-the-mill historian feels little impulse to examine and explain primitive communism although it was the cradle of humanity and, in particular, formed a starting point of modern American history.

Even contemporary writers sympathetic to the Indians, such as Oliver LaFarge, go out of their way to deny that the basic institutions of the Indians can be termed "communistic" even while offering evidence to the contrary. "The source of life, the land and its products, they [the Indians] owned in common," writes LaFarge in *As Long as the Grass Shall Grow*, page 25. "Loose talkers have called this Communism. It is not." Here is a striking example of how deep anticommunist prejudice runs.

Class calculation reinforces this tendency toward suppression. An understanding of the customs of the Indians and the reasons for their extinction may raise doubts about the eternity of private property and the standards of bourgeois life. Such knowledge spread among an enlightened people may be dangerous to the ruling ideas of the ruling class. Does it not indicate that, at least so far as the past is concerned, communism is not quite so alien to American soil as it is pictured by the witch-hunters?

Thus the expunging of the real facts about the Indians from historical memory today is no more accidental than was their physical elimination yesterday. Both have their ultimate source in the promotion of the material interests of the owners of pri-

The precursors of the monopolists acquired their property by expropriating the Indians, the British crown along with its Loyalist lackeys, and the slaveholders, not to mention their continued stripping of the small farmers and self-employed workers. They effected these dispossessions of other people's property not simply by peaceful, legal, or democratic means, but in extremely violent, high-handed, and militaristic ways. Wherever they could not get what they went after by bargaining or money, they took by main force or direct action.

The conquest of the Indians, as we have seen, takes its place in this series of events as the earliest and crassest case of the rapacity, ferocity, and duplicity with which the bourgeois forces smashed the impediments on the way to their objectives. They themselves committed the supreme crime they falsely attribute to the aims of revolutionary socialists. The extermination of the Indian was the outstanding example of "genocide" in modern American history—and it was the first rung in the ladder by which the bourgeoisie climbed to the top.

The transmission of the continent into their hands was not accomplished by peaceful agreements. It is common knowledge that virtually every treaty made with the Indians for over four hundred years was broken by the architects of the American nation. By brute force, by the most perfidious deeds, by wars of extermination, they settled the question of who was to own and occupy the continent and to rule it. The treatment of the Indians exemplifies to what lengths the owners of private property can—and will—go in promoting their material interests.

The methods by which the white invaders disposed of the Indian problem had far-reaching results. Ancient Indian society was shattered and eradicated and powerful masters placed over them and over North America. The main social substance of that sweeping change consisted in the conversion and division of tribal property in land, owned in common and cooperatively used, into private property. This continent passed from the loose network of tribal communities into the hands of

in their favor, are now more and more turning against their regime. Although American capitalism may follow paths marked out by the special conditions of its own historical development, these lead toward the same ultimate destination as its European counterparts: the graveyard where obsolete social systems are buried.

The transition from ancient Indian collectivism to the various forms of production rooted in private property also casts considerable light upon the ways and means by which the forces of bourgeois society arrived at their present eminence in America.

In their catalogue of crimes against humanity, the spokesmen for capitalism include the expropriation of property without "just compensation," the use of violence to overturn established regimes, and the resort to extralegal measures. They add, as the crime of crimes, the extermination of entire populations, for which the term "genocide" has recently been coined. These self-professed humanitarians ascribe such aims above all to "Marxist" and "Communist" devils. In contrast they hold up the angelic respect for property rights, love of peace, regard for law and order, preference for gradual change by democratic consent, and other virtues presumably inculcated by American "free enterprise."

This is a handy set of principles to justify the capitalist regime while defaming its opponents. But all these principles have little application to the conduct of the bourgeoisie in American history. They have been honored, if at all, more in the breach than in the observance.

Historians fired by zeal to indict the opponents of capitalism for these offenses should first direct their attention to the ancestors of contemporary American capitalism. No class in American history invaded the property rights of others more ruthlessly, employed violence so readily, and benefited so extensively by revolutionary actions as has the American bourgeoisie on its road to power.

vate property and the champions of free enterprise.

Modern American society did not originate on unencumbered soil in the pure and painless way pictured by Harvard's President Conant. It arose from the disintegration and ruin of two ancient societies: European feudalism and primitive American communism. Its birth was attended by two violent social conflicts. One was the struggle between the feudal order and the rising forces of capitalism in the Old World. The other was the collision between Indian tribalism and European civilization, which resulted in the breakup of the Indian way of life as a prelude to the establishment of the bourgeois regime in North America.

The historians center their attention on the first process, and it is easy to understand why. Modern American society is the offspring of European civilization; its foundations rest upon a whole series of "alien importations" from across the Atlantic.

The contributions of the Indians in the making of modern America were not on the same scale and belonged to a different order. But this is no warrant for discounting them as a negligible factor in the peculiar evolution of the American nation. Cast in the minor role of a villainous opposition, the Indian has nevertheless played an important part in the first acts of our national development. For several centuries American events were conditioned by the struggle against the Indian tribes. The European civilization transplanted to the New World grew at the direct expense of Indian life. Let us see why this was so.

In the Indian and the European, ancient society and modern civilization confronted each other and engaged in an unequal test of strength. Over thousands of years the Indians had worked out ways and means of living admirably suited to the North American wilderness.

The North American Indians were organized in hundreds of thinly dispersed tribes, numbering from a few score to a few thousand people, bound together by ties of blood kinship. Each of these tiny tribes constituted a self-sufficing economic unit.

They were far more directly and firmly attached to their natural habitats than to one another. The split-up bands had little unity of action or power of resistance against enemies like the white man. They were easily pitted against one another, since, despite an identity of social structure and institutions, they had no strong bonds of mutual interest.

The sparseness and separation of the Indian population resulted from their method of producing the necessities of life. Although there was considerable diversity of conditions from tribe to tribe and from region to region, their basic economic features were remarkably uniform. Except along the seashores, most of the North American tribes lived mainly by hunting wild animals such as the deer and buffalo. Fishing, fowling, berry-picking and farming were important but accessory sources of subsistence. Every type of social organization has laws of population and population growth corresponding to its mode of production. It has been estimated that three square miles of hunting ground were required to sustain each Indian. This imposed narrow limits on the size of the Indian population. Each tribe had to occupy sizable areas to support its members. The Iroquois sometimes traveled hundred of miles on their hunting expeditions.

The segmentation of the Indians into hundreds of petty tribal units and their slow but persistent expansion over the entire Western world had arisen from the inability of foraging and hunting economy to sustain many people on a given area. This was likewise the main cause for the warfare between neighboring tribes and for the Indians' unyielding defense of their hunting and fishing grounds against invaders. Heckewelder reports that the redskins cut off the noses and ears of every individual found on their territory and sent him back to inform his chief that on the next occasion they would scalp him (*The Evolution of Property*, by Paul Lafargue, p. 37).

The only ways to overcome the restrictions inherent in hunting economy were through the development of stock-raising or

on a far higher level and in more mature forms the common ownership of the soil and the collective use of the means of production that we meet on the very threshold of modern American history.

Thus the struggle for the land in America is reproducing, at its own pace and in its own peculiar ways, the basic pattern of development being traced out by civilized society as a whole. This pattern, too, has been explained and foreseen by the founders of Marxism.

"All civilized peoples begin with the common ownership of the land," wrote Engels. "With all peoples who have passed a certain primitive stage, in the course of the development of agriculture this common ownership becomes a fetter on production. It is abolished, negated, and after a longer or shorter series of intermediate stages is transformed into private property."

"But at a higher stage of agricultural development, brought about by private property in land itself, private property in turn becomes a fetter on production as is the case today, both with small and large landownership. The demand that it also should be negated, that it should once again be transformed into common property necessarily arises. But this demand does not mean the restoration of the old original common ownership, but the institution of a far higher and more developed form of possession in common which, far from being a hindrance to production, on the contrary for the first time frees production from all fetters and gives it the possibility of making full use of modern chemical discoveries and mechanical inventions" (*Anti-Dühring*, pp. 156-7).

Champions of capitalism such as Conant imply or imagine that, thanks to its unique features and exceptional capacities, capitalist America is set apart from the rest of the capitalist world. All its peculiarities and powers, however, will not suffice in the future, any more than they have in the past, to enable the bourgeoisie in this country to escape the operation of the laws of the class struggle. These laws, which formerly worked

wageworkers, are bound to assert their presence and power as the oppressions—and depressions—of monopoly capitalism drive them to seek a new road.

Whatever phases the struggle for the land will go through as class antagonisms become more pronounced, the method of its final solution has already been indicated by Marx:

“From the point of view of a higher economic form of society, the private ownership of the globe on the part of some individuals will appear quite as absurd as the private ownership of one man by another. Even a whole society, a nation, or even all societies together, are not the *owners* of the globe. They are only its *possessors*, its users, and they have to hand it down to the coming generations in an improved condition, like the good fathers of families” (*Capital*, vol. III, pp. 901-2).

Just as the private ownership of one man by another had to be abolished in this country, so the socialist revolution of our time will have to abolish private ownership of the land.

The destruction of primitive communism based on common land ownership by the Indian tribes was indispensable to the development of American capitalism. The rapid growth of unemployed bourgeois relations in the United States was made possible by the thoroughness with which the bourgeois forces swept aside all precapitalist institutions, beginning with those of the Indian.

Now this historical cycle is coming to a close and a new one is opening up. The main direction of American society since the crushing of the Indian has been away from primitive collectivism toward private property in more and more developed capitalist forms. In the reversal of social trends now under way, the main line of progress is away from private property and toward collectivism in socialist forms.

When the American people, under the leadership of the industrial workers, succeed in their task of converting capitalist landed property into public property, they will in effect revive

agriculture, a shift from food *collecting* to food *producing*. But unlike the Asiatics and Europeans, the Indians of North America domesticated no animals except the dog and the turkey. They had no horses, cattle, swine, or sheep.

The Indians (that is, the Indian women who did the work) proved to be outstanding agriculturists. They had domesticated over forty useful plants, among them maize, tobacco, potatoes, tomatoes, peanuts, beans, and others that then and later had considerable economic importance. Agriculture based on maize production gave birth to the various grades of village Indians and made possible the more concentrated populations and brilliant achievements of Mayan and Aztec cultures.

But Indian progress in agriculture became stymied by insurmountable technological barriers. The Indians derived their meat and clothing from wild game, not from tamed and tended animals. They did not invent the wheel or the axle; they did not know iron or how to smelt it. Their implements were mostly made of stone, wood, bone, and fiber. Without draft animals and iron, it was impossible to develop the plow or even an efficient and durable hoe.

Without these technological aids, agriculture could not advance to the point where it could yield food and grain enough to support extensive and constantly increasing bodies of people. According to latest investigations, it was the extinction of the forests and the exhaustion of the available corn-bearing lands cultivated by the crudest stick methods which eventually caused the collapse of Mayan culture. (See *The Ancient Maya*, by Sylvanus G. Morley, 1946.)

The whites, however, bore with them all the means for advanced agriculture accumulated since the invention of the animal-drawn plow. These improved implements and methods of cultivation were the stepping-stones by which Europe had approached capitalism.

But along with superior tools and techniques of production

the Europeans brought their correspondingly different property forms and relations.

Although the Indians possessed personal property, they were unfamiliar with private property in the means of production, or even in the distribution of the means of subsistence. They carried on their principal activities: hunting, fishing, cultivating, homemaking, and warfare, in a collective manner. The product of their labors was more or less equally shared among all members of the tribe.

Above all, the North American Indians knew no such thing as private property in land, which is the basis of all other kinds of private ownership in the means of production. When the white man arrived, there was not one acre from the Atlantic to the Pacific that belonged to a private person, that could be alienated from the community or assigned to anyone outside the tribe. The very idea that ancestral lands from which they drew their sustenance could be taken from the people, become an article of commerce, and be bought and sold was inconceivable, fantastic, and abhorrent to the Indian. Even when Indians were given money or goods for a title to their lands, they could not believe that this transaction involved the right to deprive them of their use forever.

"The earth is like fire and water that cannot be sold," said the Omahas. The Shawnee chief Tecumseh, who sought to combine all the Indians from Canada to Florida against the encroachment of the whites upon their hunting grounds exclaimed: "Sell land! As well sell air and water. The Great Spirit gave them in common to all."

But the "Great Spirit" animating and dominating the whites had an entirely different revelation. The intruders looked upon the newfound lands and their occupants through the eyes of a civilization founded on opposite premises. To them it was natural to convert everything into private property and thereby exclude the rest of humanity from its use and enjoyment. The conquerors maintained that whatever existed in the New

stop at its present point and at the limits imposed by the interests of the rich. In fact, the fight against their monopoly and misuse of the land is bound to flare up again as it has during every great social crisis.

In his autobiography Oscar Ameringer tells an interesting anecdote in this connection about an Oklahoma cattleman who had firmly opposed socialist ideas until he was ruined by the 1929 depression. In 1932 he approached Ameringer and declared: "What we got to have is this here revolution you used to preach about."

"You mean divide up and start all over again?" asked Ameringer.

"No, not divide up," exclaimed the cattleman angrily, "but own our land and cattle and things in common like the Indians use to do before the government robbed them of everything by giving them title deeds."

"That's better," Ameringer acknowledged, "provided we add railroads, banks, packing plants and a great many other things to those you mentioned."

The impact of the oncoming social crises will undoubtedly call forth similar responses from considerable sections of farmers who today appear eternally wedded to "free enterprise."

The actual cultivators of the soil, small farmers, indentured servants, tenants, or slaves, never reconciled themselves in the past to the exploiters of labor on the land, to landlordism or absentee ownership. The embattled farmers carried through the fight for independence and democracy against British-backed feudalism during the First American Revolution. Their vanguard in Kansas first challenged in action the slave power, the forerunners of the farmers who filled the Union armies in the Civil War. The agrarian Populists conducted stubborn struggles against the tyranny of the plutocrats in the last part of the nineteenth century. These memorable precedents prefigure how the toilers on the land, whether small owners, sharecroppers, or

The outcome of all this has been to disperse the land among various categories of individual owners and to concentrate the best situated and most productive areas in the hands of a wealthy minority. At no time since the overthrow of Indian tribalism by the bearers of landed private property has the American earth belonged to the inhabitants thereof, even when it formally belonged to the government. For each of these governments, controlled by the propertied classes, served as no more than a temporary custodian before turning titles to the land over to private owners.

The unexpressed assumption of all except the most radical representatives of bourgeois thought on this problem (such as Henry George) is that the land along with the other means of production shall forever be used and abused by private proprietors and any subsequent redistribution will take place within the framework of private ownership.

It cannot be denied that they have what the jurists call a "prima facie" case, since that has been the main trend for over four hundred years and appears to be the unshakable state of affairs today. The moneyed men with their banks, insurance companies, and corporations continue to gather the best part of the land into their hands and reap its benefits. At the same New York Herald Tribune Forum, where Harvard President Conant in October 1948 spoke about the blessings of democratic capitalism, cries of alarm were raised by other speakers over the mismanagement and waste of our national resources owing to capitalist anarchy and greed.

What will be the ultimate conclusion of the contest which began with the dispossession of the Indian? Will the American people permit the small fraction of wealthy proprietors to engross the land and its wealth, to ravage the national resources, and exclude the majority of the population from rational management and enjoyment of the land?

It would be an illusion to think that the struggle over the land which has already passed through so many changes will

World, or came out of it, was to be vested either in an individual or a power separate and distinct from the community or towering above it, like the monarchy, the state, or the Church.

They did not exempt human beings from this process. The invaders seized not only the land but its inhabitants and sought, wherever they could, to convert the Indians into their private possessions as chattel slaves.

Those who were driven across the Atlantic by religious and political persecution were a minority. For the majority, the lust for aggrandizement and the greed for personal gain were among the prime passions actuating the Europeans. It was these material motives, more powerful than wind or wave, that propelled the first Europeans overseas and then inevitably brought them into collision with the aboriginal inhabitants.

The conquerors came as robbers and enslavers; they stayed as colonizers and traders. America had belonged to the Indian tribes both by hereditary right and by life-and-death need to maintain themselves and perpetuate their kind upon the tribal territories. But the tribes wanted to hold the land for different purposes and on different terms than the whites. The Europeans aimed to acquire the land for themselves or for some sovereign or noble who held title for their country. The newcomers needed land, not simply for hunting, trapping, and fishing, but for extensive agriculture, for lumbering, for settlements and trading centers, for commerce and manufacture—in a phrase, for private exploitation on an expanding scale.

Thus, regardless of their wishes, the Indians and Europeans were sharply counterposed to each other by virtue of their contradictory economic needs and aims. The Indian could maintain his economy with its primitive communistic institutions and customs, its crude division of labor between the sexes, and its tribal ties of blood kinship only by keeping the white men at bay. The newcomers could plant their settlements and expand their economic activities only by pressing upon the Indian tribes and

snatching their territories. This antagonism, flowing from their diametrically opposing systems of production, governed the dealings between red men and white from their first contacts.

The ways and means by which the natives were enslaved, disposed, and exterminated cannot be set forth here in detail. The pattern of robbery, violence, debauchery, and trickery was fixed by the Spaniards as early as the landings of Columbus. In their lust for gold Columbus and his men depopulated Hispaniola. Through overwork, abuse, starvation, despair, and disease, the original population of the island dwindled from 300,000 in 1492 to an actual count of 60,000 in 1508. Only a remnant of 500 survived by 1548.

The same story was repeated on the mainland of North America time and again during the next four hundred years by the Dutch, English, French, and Americans. The Indian wars in New England demonstrated how ruthless and irreconcilable was the conflict between the opposing social forces. While the first colonists in Massachusetts were busy securing a foothold, Indian neighbors established friendly and helpful ties with them. They gave the Pilgrims food in time of distress, taught them how to raise maize and tobacco and how to cope with the forest and its wildlife.

But the divines who enjoined the Puritans not to covet their neighbors' wives taught otherwise about the Indian hunting grounds. These religious and political leaders insisted that all land not actually occupied and cultivated belonged, not to the Indians, but to the Massachusetts Bay Colony which they controlled. Roger Williams was tried and banished from Massachusetts in 1635 because he declared that the "Natives are the true owners" of the land. His heretical views on the land question were condemned as no less dangerous than his unorthodox religious opinions.

The New England colonists annexed the tribal lands by waging wars of extermination against the natives over the next

The Indians and the Struggle for Possession of the Land

A clear and correct conception of the place occupied in American history by Indian society throws much-needed light upon another fundamental question of this country's social evolution—the struggle for possession of the land. That struggle begins with the wresting of the tribal hunting grounds from the Indians and the transmission of this land to new owners belonging to a different type of social organization who needed it for new economic activities—agriculture, trade, mining, ranching, city-dwelling, industry, etc.

At various stages along the route this struggle has involved the principal state and clerical powers of Western Europe as well as the various classes transplanted to American soil. Our land has changed hands several times since the sixteenth century, passing not only from country to country but also from class to class and from person to person. Questions concerning the use, distribution, and ownership of the land have played crucial roles in every great American upheaval: in the wars against the Indians, as well as in the fight against British domination (the abolition of crown lands and other royal restrictions, abolition of entail and primogeniture, confiscation and sale of Loyalist estates) and in the Civil War (the Homestead Act, the land question in the Southern states).

baffled by the behavior of these strange creatures from another world, could not fathom their motives. Not only the Aztecs but the North American tribes had to pass through many cruel experiences before they realized how implacable were the aggressions of the whites—and then it was too late. They may be excused for their lack of comprehension. But the same cannot be said of bourgeois historians of our own day who still fail to understand them after the fact.

The founders of the capitalist regime in North America had a double mission to perform. One was to subdue or eliminate whatever precapitalist social forms and forces existed or sprang up on the continent. The other was to construct the material requirements for bourgeois civilization. The destructive and creative aspects of this process went hand in hand. The extirpation of the Indian tribes was needed to clear the ground for the foundations of the projected new society.

The overthrow of the Indians had contradictory effects upon the subsequent development of American life. The installation of private property in land and the widening exchange of agricultural products at home and in the world market provided the economic basis and incentives for the rapid growth of colonization, agriculture, commerce, craftsmanship, cities, and the accumulation of wealth. These conditions fashioned and fostered the virile native forces which prepared and carried through the second great upheaval in American history, the colonists' revolt against England.

The rise of the English colonies in North America and their successful strivings for unhampered development form one of the most celebrated chapters in modern history. But an all-sided review of the process must note that a price was paid for these achievements, especially in the sphere of social relations.

eighty years, beginning with the Pequot war in the Connecticut Valley in 1643 and concluding with the expulsion of the Abenakis from the Maine and New Hampshire coasts in 1722. The fiercest of these conflicts, King Philip's War (1675-78) was directly provoked by the struggle over the land. The increase in white population in the Connecticut Valley from 22,500 in 1640 to 52,000 in 1675 whetted the land hunger of the settlers at the same time that it threatened to engulf the Indian hunting grounds.

Their defeats brought death or enslavement to the Indians, expulsion from the tribal territories, and distribution of their land to the whites. The rich corporation of Harvard University today derives income from landed property originally seized from these Indians "by military conquest." Shouldn't its president show more respect for the historical origins of his own state and for the deeds of his Pilgrim ancestors?

The same predatory policy was duplicated in the other colonies and no less vigorously prosecuted after they secured independence. An itinerant preacher, Peter Cartwright, testifies in his autobiography concerning the conquest of Kentucky: "Kentucky was claimed by no particular tribe of Indians, but was regarded as a common hunting ground by the various tribes, east, west, north and south. It abounded in various valuable game, such as buffalo, elk, bear, deer, turkeys and many other smaller game, and hence the Indians struggled hard to keep the white people from taking possession of it. Many hard and bloody battles were fought, and thousands killed on both sides; and rightly it was named the 'land of blood.' But finally the Indians were overpowered, and the white man obtained a peaceful and quiet possession of it."

This combat to the death continued until the last frontier was settled and the choicest lands seized. "The roster of massacres of Indian men, women and children extends from the Great Swamp Massacre of 1696 in Rhode Island, through the killing of the friendly Christian Indians at Wyoming, Pennsylvania

nia, when the republic was young, on through the friendly Arivaipas of Arizona, the winter camp of the Colorado Cheyennes, to the final dreadful spectacle of Wounded Knee in the year 1870," writes Oliver LaFarge. That is how America was taken from the Indians.

Before the white conquerors eradicated Indian society, the Indians passed through an intermediate stage in which their customary relations were considerably altered. The acquisition of horses and firearms from the Europeans opened up the prairies to the Indians in the interior by enabling them to range far more widely and effectively in hunting buffalo and deer. But the ensuing changes in the lives of the Plains tribes were accomplished by their independent efforts without direct intervention by the whites and within the framework of their ancient institutions.

The fur trade with the whites had quite different and damaging effects upon Indian life. The fur trade early became one of the most profitable and far-flung branches of commerce between North America and Europe. The fur factors, hunters, and trappers served as agents of the rich merchants and big chartered monopolies dominating the business and acted as advance scouts of capitalist civilization.

The Indians were first drawn into the orbit of capitalist commerce largely through extension of the fur trade. In the course of time the fur-trading tribes embraced all the North American Indians except those in the extreme South and Southwest. The growing interchange of products between the tribes and traders upset the relatively stable Indian existence.

At first this exchange of goods lifted the living standards and increased the wealth and population of the Indians. An iron ax was better than a stone hatchet; a rifle better than a bow and arrow. But, as the fur trade expanded, its evil consequences more and more asserted themselves. The call for ever-larger quantities of furs and skins by the wealthy classes here and abroad led to the rapid destruction of fur-bearing animals, who

inflame their greed. After stripping the natives of the gold they possessed, Columbus and his men drove them to forced labor for more. But the Caribbeans did not yield their liberty as readily as their gold.

"These chattel slaves were worked to death. So terrible was their life that they were driven to mass suicide, to mass infanticide, to mass abstinence from sexual life in order that children should not be born into horror. Lethal epidemics followed upon the will to die. The murders and desolations exceeded those of the most pitiless tyrants of earlier history; nor have they been surpassed since" (*Indians of the Americas*, by John Collier, p. 57).

The Aztec chief Tauhitle thought that "the Spaniards were troubled with a disease of the heart, for which gold was the specific remedy." What this naive Aztec diagnosed as a "disease" was really the normal mode of behavior of the white invaders. As the subsequent conquests of Mexico and Peru demonstrated, nothing sufficed to quench their thirst for the precious metals.

Although Sir Walter Raleigh and other English colonizers hoped to emulate Cortez and the Pizarros, they found no ancient civilizations on the North Atlantic coasts to plunder. Their conquest of the Indians, although inspired by similar sordid motives, was conducted along somewhat different lines. The traders cheated and debauched the natives; the settlers seized their hunting grounds and massacred the tribes; the governments incited one band of Indians against another while destroying the rights and freedom of all! This despoiling of the Indians by the whites dominates the entire historical record, from the first settlements in Virginia to the recent attempt by the Montana Power and Light Company to deprive the Flathead Indians of their territorial rights.

Belonging as they did to incompatible levels of social existence, both the Indians and whites found it impossible to reach any mutual understanding for any length of time. The Indians,

should possess more than others, and that those who have the most should be more highly esteemed than those who have the least" (*The Evolution of Property* by Paul Lafargue, p. 35).

This spirit of equality extended to women, children, and even to those war captives adopted into the clan and tribe. Women not only stood on an equal footing, but sometimes exercised superior authority. The Indian elders rarely abused or whipped their children. There was no servant class—and therefore no masters.

The forms of society which displaced Indian tribalism surpassed it in a great many respects—but, we repeat, they were never more equalitarian. The American natives lacked many things known to the white man, but they did not suffer from a ruling aristocracy of birth or wealth. The institution of aristocracy in general is bound up with the growth of property and the concentration of wealth in private hands—and these were indeed "alien importations" of white civilization.

The contrast between the contending cultures was most sharply expressed in their attitudes toward the acquisition of private wealth. The passion for property had hardly awakened among the Indians. On the other hand, the quest for riches was the most powerful driving force of the new society, the principal source of its evils and the most conspicuous trait of its outstanding representatives.

The precious metals were the quintessence of wealth, prestige, and power in Europe and the Holy Grail of the pioneer explorers in the "Age of Geographical Discovery." In a letter written to Ferdinand and Isabella from Jamaica in 1503, Columbus rhapsodized: "Gold is a wonderful thing! Whoever owns it is lord of all he wants. With gold it is even possible to open for souls a way to paradise!"

Imagine his astonishment when the Haitians, who used the metal for ornament but not for money, freely handed over gold to the Spaniards in exchange for trinkets. This served only to

reproduced too slowly to meet this demand.

Indians without contact with civilization were careful not to slaughter more animals than were needed for personal consumption. But once they trapped and hunted for the market, other incentives came into play. These drove the tribes whose hunting and fishing grounds approached exhaustion into bitter competition with adjoining tribes for control of the available supply.

The new conditions produced bloody clashes between competing tribes as well as with the white men who sought possession of the hunting grounds for their own reasons. In trade and war, occupations which are not always easily distinguishable, the role of firearms proved decisive. The Indians could not manufacture or repair firearms, or make powder. They had to bargain with the white men for these and the other indispensable means of production and destruction upon which their lives and livelihoods came to depend.

This placed the Indians at the mercy of bearers of the higher culture who showed them little mercy. Consequently the Indians became the victims not only of civilized diseases and such civilized vices as alcoholism and prostitution, but also of the good things acquired from the Europeans. Through the fur trade they were sucked into a vortex of commercial rivalry, intertribal and international wars that carried them toward destruction.

Various Indian tribes sought to defend themselves and their hunting grounds from relentless encroachment of the colonists by confederation or by allying themselves with one great power against another. They leagued with the French against the British, the British against the French, the Spanish against the British, and the King against the Patriots. Later some Southern tribes were to attach themselves to the Confederacy against the Union.

Although the Indians fought with unexampled courage and

tenacity, neither heroic sacrifices nor unequal and unstable alliances could save them. They lacked the numbers, the organization, and above all the productive capacity for carrying on sustained warfare. They had to limit themselves largely to border raids and scalping expeditions and were often laid low by hunger in winter and scarcity of weapons and ammunition. Neither singly nor in combination could the natives do more than delay the onward march of their white adversaries. Their history is essentially a record of one long retreat across the continent under the onslaught of the conquerors.

The French had more harmonious relations with the Indians than the English, primarily because of differences in their economic aims and activities. Except for the Quebec *habitants*, the French were mainly engaged in hunting and trading; they did not covet the Indian lands but sought to maintain favorable trade relations with the tribes. It is recorded that for two centuries (1690-1870) there were only sporadic acts of hostility between the natives and agents of the Hudson Bay Company, which monopolized the Indian trade in Canada. The reason? "In no case, did the French intruders ask, as did the English colonists, for deeds of territory" (*Narrative and Critical History of America*, vol. I, p. 285).

Behind the English hunters and traders swarmed the solid ranks of colonizers, farmers, planters, speculators, and landlords, who wanted the Indian hunting grounds for their own property.

This contrast was emphasized by Duquesne when he tried to win the Iroquois from their friendship with Britain. The Frenchman told them: "Are you ignorant of the difference between the king of England and the king of France? Go see the forts our king has established and you will see that you can still hunt under their very walls. They have been placed for your advantage in places which you frequent. The English, on the contrary, are no sooner in possession of a place than the game is driven

Sucktutsh may be equally divided amongst us," if it had to be divided.

To this day, the traditions of communal equality are so ingrained among Indians uncontaminated by civilization that they put capitalist society to shame. Recently when oil was found on lands allotted to Jecarilla Indians in northern New Mexico, the individual owners could have legally insisted upon taking the entire income for themselves. This would have meant riches for a few and nothing for the others. However, after deliberation in council, all the Indians made over their mineral rights to the tribe so that whatever was gained should be applied to the good of the whole people. How remote are these "backward" Apaches from the standards of bourgeois "moralists."

The Indians found incomprehensible many traits of the whites: their disregard of pledges considered inviolate by the native; their fondness for indoor life; their intolerance of other people's ways; their lust for material possessions and money, etc. As primitive hunters and warriors, the Indians were accustomed to slay not only wild game but rivals who interfered with their essential activities; they scalped enemies, tortured and burned captives. These customs were justified and sanctified by their religious beliefs. But they could not understand the duplicity of Christians who preached peace and goodwill and yet waged relentless war upon them.

The Indian was repelled by the inhumanity displayed by members of the same white community toward each other, the heartless egotism which flowed from class society and bourgeois anarchy. There was greater equality in work and play, in distribution and enjoyment of goods, in social intercourse and status among the Indians than among the whites. Every member of the tribe shared alike in good times or in bad, in feast or in famine, in war as in peace; no one went hungry while a few had more than enough to eat. "They think it strange that some

Wissler, dean of the scientific staff of the American Museum of Natural History and an outstanding authority on Indian life, writes that the Indian "was not really a communist, but he was liberal with food. So long as he had food, he was expected to share it" (p. 225). This is a typical effort to obscure the communist character of Indian customs. The bourgeois scientist cannot refrain from trying to convert the Indian into a philanthropic "liberal," whereas the habit of sharing possessions with others was an integral aspect of their primitive communist mode of life.

Anyone in the tribe, for example, could borrow without permission the belongings of another—and return them without thanks. There were no debtors or creditors where private property and money were absent. William Penn wrote: "Give them a fine gun, coat or any other thing, it may pass twenty hands before it sticks. . . . Wealth circulateth like the blood, all parts partake, and . . . none shall want what another hath."

How this tribal solidarity was broken up by civilization can be seen from the following petition by the Mohegan Indians to the Connecticut State Assembly in 1789:

"Yes, the Times have turned everything Upside down. . . . In Times past our Fore-Fathers lived in Peace, Love and great harmony, and had everything in Great plenty. . . . They had no Contentment about their lands, it lay in Common to them all, and they had but one large dish and they Could all eat together in Peace and Love—But alas, it is not so now, all our Fishing, Hunting and Fowling is entirely gone. And we have now begun to Work on our Land, Keep Cattle, Horses and Hogs And we Build Houses and fence in Lots, And now we plainly See that one Dish and one Fire will not do any longer for us—Some few that are Stronger than others and they will keep off the poor, weak, the halt and the Blind, and will take the Dish to themselves . . . poor Widows and Orphans must be pushed to one side and there they must Set a Craying, Starving and die."

This pathetic petition concludes with a plea "That our Dish of

away. The forest falls before them as they advance and the soil is laid bare, so that you can scarce find the wherewithal to erect shelter for the night."

The incompatibility of the hunting economy with advancing agriculture also became a major source of division between the American colonists and the English government. King George's proclamation of 1763 forbade royal governors to grant land or titles beyond the Alleghenies or private persons to buy land from the Indians. This Quebec Act, designed to monopolize the fur trade for the English and contain colonial settlement on the coastal side of the Allegheny Mountains, imparted a powerful stimulant to colonial revolt.

The height of the onslaught against the Indians was attained when the capitalists took complete command of the government. The three decades following the Civil War have been correctly called by the historian Bancroft "the history of aboriginal extermination." The Civil War generals turned from battle against the slaveholders to consummate the conquest of the Indians in the West. General Halleck urged that the Apaches "be hunted and exterminated," and General Sheridan uttered his notorious remark, "There are no good Indians but dead Indians." The attitude toward the Indians was bluntly expressed by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in his report to Congress in 1870: "When treating with savage men as with savage beasts, no question of national honor can arise. Whether to fight, to run away, or to employ a ruse, is only a question of expediency."

Capitalist civilization could not stop halfway at reconstructing Indian life and subordinating it to its needs. With the expansion of settlement, the colonists kept pushing the red men westward, hemming in their living space, violating agreements with them, taking over more and more of their territories. The late nineteenth century witnessed the final mopping-up operations by which the Indians were deprived of their lives, their lands, and their independence. The few hundred thousand sur-

vivors were then imprisoned in reservations under government guard.

Victimization of the Indians did not cease even after they had been reduced to an impotent remnant on the reservations. Lands which had not been seized by force were thereafter stolen by fraud. Through the land allotment system the Bureau of Indian Affairs generously gave a small piece of the tribal lands to each Indian, declared the remainder "surplus," and sold or allotted it to the whites. Thus the last of the communal lands, with some exceptions, were broken up and absorbed into the system of private property and free enterprise.

The insuperable opposition between the two social systems was equally evident on the side of the Indians in their determination to preserve their established ways. There were no lack of attempts, for example, to enslave the natives. But they defended their freedom as fiercely as their lands. The Indians could not suffer servitude. Such a condition was repugnant to their habits, feelings, and productive activities.

The Indian warriors resisted to the death any reversal in their status and occupations, sickened in captivity, refused to reproduce, and died off. They could not be broken on the wheel of slave agriculture.

It has always been a difficult and protracted job to reshape human material molded by one social system into the labor conditions of another, especially when this involves degradation in status. Moreover, as the experience of the Spaniards with the Indians below the Rio Grande testifies, it is easier to transform cultivators of the soil into slaves than to subjugate hunting peoples.

The same attachment to their roving hunting life which induced the Indians to oppose enslavement led them to reject and withstand assimilation while so many other groups were being mixed in the great American melting pot. The Indian tribe was indissolubly united with its home territory. The areas

of tribal equalitarianism, the truly democratic nature of Indian institutions and of the whole net of social relations stemming from primitive communism just as they suppress the motives for the destruction of this system. Both cast discredit on the bourgeois past.

Despite their backwardness in other respects, far more genuine democracy prevailed among the Indians than among their successors. Village and camp were administered by elected councils of elders. The tribes discussed and decided all important issues in common. Military leaders and sachems were chosen for outstanding talents and deeds, not for their wealth and birth. Even where chieftainship was hereditary, the chiefs could not exercise arbitrary authority or command obedience without consent of the community. Military service was voluntary. The Indians knew no such coercive institutions of modern civilization as police, jails, courts, taxes, conscript or standing armies.

The equalitarianism and primitive humanism of Indian relations surpassed the proudest claims of bourgeois society. Mutual assistance was the watchword of the community. The tribe cared for all the aged, infirm, sick, and young. Hospitality was a sacred obligation, and the Indian was considerably more generous toward the needy and the stranger than the bourgeois who scorned him as inferior. So paramount was this law of hospitality that even an enemy who came without threats had to be given food and shelter.

William Barram, the naturalist, noted in 1791 that the Creeks had a common granary made up of voluntary contributions "to which every citizen has the right of free and equal access when his own private stores are consumed, to serve as a surplus to fly to for succor, to assist neighboring towns whose crops may have failed, accommodate strangers and travelers, afford provisions or supplies when they go forth on hostile expeditions, etc. . . ."

In his description of *The Indians of the United States*, Clark

bound to respect; and that the white man is entitled by right of birth to the red man's submission and humiliation.

The bearers of capitalism introduced on North American soil the cleavages and conflicts between master and slave, exploiters and exploited, idlers and toilers, rich and poor which have flourished ever since. Alongside the degradation and suppression of the Indians by the whites there developed profound antagonisms between diverse sections of the new society.

Since the planting of the first colonies, white America has never been without privileged possessing classes at its head. In colonial days the masses were dominated by aristocrats of birth and money; after the War of Independence, by Northern capitalists and Southern slaveholders; since the Civil War, by millionaires and billionaires. These ruling minorities have all elevated themselves above the common people—not to speak of outcasts like foreign immigrants, Negroes, Latin Americans, and Orientals—and subordinated to their narrow class interests whatever democratic institutions the people have acquired.

This darker side of the social transformation wrought by the impact of European civilization upon ancient America is usually passed by in silence, or at least slurred over without explanation, by bourgeois historians. Yet the emergence of class stratifications formed one of the essential lines of demarcation between Indian collectivism and white society.

Conant's own mind has been warped by these unspoken traditions and betrays their influence in refined forms. The disdain of the Anglo-Saxon conqueror can be discerned in his dismissal of the existence and struggles of the Indians. What is this but an unconscious—and thereby all the more meaningful—evidence of that racial arrogance and antipathy which induces white scholars to disparage the real role of the colored races in American history? This comes from that white-supremacy prejudice which American palefaces have for centuries aimed not only against the red races but against the black and yellow.

Bourgeois scholars distort and deny the distinguishing traits

which provided food, clothing, and shelter formed the center and circumference of their actions, emotions, and thoughts. Their religious ideas and ceremonies were bound up with the places associated with their ancestors. To sever the Indians from these lands was to shatter the foundation of their lives.

The Indians either had to remain aloof from white civilization or else remake themselves from top to bottom in the image of their enemy. The latter course involved forfeiting their cherished traditions and traits and converting themselves and their children into human beings of a strange and different type. This leap across the ages could be taken by scattered individuals but not by whole tribal communities.

Even where they attempted to absorb civilization bit by bit, the white men did not permit the Indians to avoid corruption or extinction. The Indians found that they could not borrow part of the alien culture without swallowing the rest, the evil with the good; they could not modify their communal culture with the attributes of civilization and preserve its foundations intact. The most conclusive proof was given by the fate of the Cherokees, one of the "five civilized tribes." The Cherokees, who inhabited the southern Alleghenies and were one of the largest tribes in the United States, went the furthest in acquiring the ways of the white man. In the early decades of the nineteenth century, the Cherokees transformed themselves into flourishing and skillful stock-raisers, farmers, traders, and even slave owners. They amassed considerable wealth, created an alphabet, and formed a government modeled upon that of the United States.

However, they took these steps without discarding communal ownership of the lands which had been guaranteed to them forever in 1798 by the federal government. Thus the Cherokee nation stood out like an irritating foreign body within Southern society. The Southern whites were resolved to bring the Cherokees under the sway of private property in land and the centralized state power. Under their pressure federal troops forced the

Cherokees from their homes and deported them en masse. Their lands were distributed by lottery to the whites.

Even after the Cherokees resettled on the Indian Territory in Oklahoma, they could not keep undisturbed possession of their lands and customs. The Bureau of Indian Affairs inflicted the vicious "land allotment" system upon them whereby the tribal territories were cut into individual lots and placed upon the free market. The government changed the mode of inheritance along with the system of landholding by decreeing that property should henceforth descend through the father's offspring instead of the mother's.

This capped the process of despoiling the tribe of its lands and its rights and overthrowing the basic ancestral institutions of the community. Private property, patrilinear inheritance, and the centralized oppressive state displaced communal property, the matriarchal family, and tribal democracy. The American Ethnology Bureau reported in 1883 that the Cherokees "felt that they were, as a nation, being slowly but surely compressed within the contracting coils of the giant anaconda of civilization; yet they held to the vain hope that a spirit of justice and mercy would be born of their helpless condition which would finally prevail in their favor."

Their hope was vain. "The giant anaconda of civilization" crushed its prey and swallowed it. By such food has American capitalism grown to its present strength and stature.

The Destruction of Indian Communal Democracy

The first essay refuted the contention that capitalist America was not based on conquest, by setting forth the real historical facts about the wars of extirpation against the Indians. From their false premise about the virgin birth of bourgeois society, the capitalist apologists draw an equally false conclusion. For example, in his anti-Marxist polemic at the New York Herald Tribune Forum in October 1948, Harvard President Conant declared that "we have nowhere in our tradition the idea of an aristocracy descended from the conquerors and entitled to rule by right of birth." This assertion is no better grounded in historical fact, and is indeed the opposite of the truth, as we propose to show.

So far as the relations between the Indians and the whites are concerned, the subjugation of the natives initiated the distinctions between conquerors and conquered along the racial lines which have survived to this day. From the landing of the Spanish conquistadors through the crushing of the last insurgents among the Plains Indians by federal troops up to the present government policy of "enlightened guardianship," the American whites have maintained a hostile attitude toward the Indians. They have taken for granted that a paleface is better than an Indian; that the Indian has no rights the overlord is